

## FORM B – BUILDING

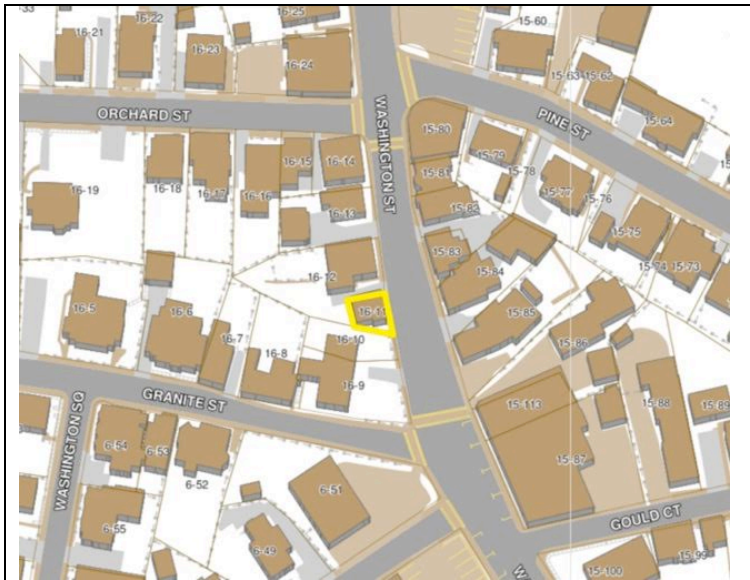
MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION  
MASSACHUSETTS ARCHIVES BUILDING  
220 MORRISSEY BOULEVARD  
BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02125

### Photograph



South and east (façade) elevations

### Locus Map



**Recorded by:** Wendy Frontiero and Kathleen K. Broomer

**Organization:** Gloucester Historical Commission

**Date (month / year):** d r a f t – June 2016

Assessor's Number    USGS Quad    Area(s)    Form Number

16-11

GLO.

**Town/City:** Gloucester

**Place:** (*neighborhood or village*):  
downtown

**Address:** 48 Washington Street

**Historic Name:** Mother of Grace Club

**Uses:** Present: religious

Original: engine house

**Date of Construction:** ca. 1873

**Source:** historic maps and atlases; see bibliog.

**Style/Form:** Italianate

**Architect/Builder:**

**Exterior Material:**

Foundation: concrete

Wall/Trim: vinyl siding and trim

Roof: fiberglass-asphalt shingles

**Outbuildings/Secondary Structures:**  
none

**Major Alterations** (*with dates*):

Artificial siding and replacement windows (both, L 20<sup>th</sup> c)

**Condition:** good

**Moved:** no ☒    yes ☐    **Date:**

**Acreage:** 0.02 acres

**Setting:** Located on a main thoroughfare among densely built, residential and commercial development

# INVENTORY FORM B CONTINUATION SHEET

GLOUCESTER

48 WASHINGTON STREET

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION

220 MORRISSEY BOULEVARD, BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02125

Area(s) Form No.

GLO.

☐ Recommended for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

*If checked, you must attach a completed National Register Criteria Statement form.*

*Use as much space as necessary to complete the following entries, allowing text to flow onto additional continuation sheets.*

## ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION:

*Describe architectural features. Evaluate the characteristics of this building in terms of other buildings within the community.*

The Mother of Grace Club occupies a very small trapezoidal lot on the west side of Washington Street, near the southern end of this major thoroughfare. The streetscape in this vicinity features a mix of residential and small-scale commercial properties dating from the early 19<sup>th</sup> through late 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. While the lot itself is virtually flat, the street overall is sloping gently down to the south, where it terminates near Gloucester Harbor. There is no front setback, and side setbacks are minimal to non-existent; the south side contains a concrete pad for the side entrance and a small bed of perennial plantings.

The Mother of Grace Club consists of a main block measuring 18 feet wide by 26 feet long, with a two-foot wide extension along the full length of its north elevation. The main block rises two stories from a concrete foundation to a front-gable roof with emphatic gable returns. Walls are clad with vinyl siding and typically with vinyl trim; wood fascia boards appear to survive at the roof eaves. Windows contain 1/1 double hung sash. A small interior brick chimney rises from the ridge at the very back of the building.

The symmetrical façade contains a pair of modern double-leaf doors in the center of the first floor and two windows in the second floor. At the north elevation, the narrow first floor extension (also with a concrete foundation) features a shed roof and two windows offset on its eastern end; there are no windows on the second story of the main block. The south elevation contains a single-leaf, flush-panel door at its eastern end, sheltered by a modern aluminum canopy, and one window at its western end; again, the second story has no fenestration.

The Mother of Grace Club building is a modest vernacular building that retains the essence of its unusual origins as an engine house. The major alteration is the application of vinyl siding and loss of original wood trim; the center door may have been reduced in size, but this would need to be confirmed with historic photographs. The building is distinguished by its compact form, simple design, and survival as an example of wood-frame civic architecture from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century.

## HISTORICAL NARRATIVE

*Discuss the history of the building. Explain its associations with local (or state) history. Include uses of the building, and the role(s) the owners/occupants played within the community.*

Associated with the Mother of Grace Club since 1944, this building is culturally significant in Gloucester. Though its early history is unclear, the building appears to be in place on the 1873 bird's-eye view of Gloucester. Deed research in the future may yield additional information. Owned by the City of Gloucester, the building served several uses in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century, as an Engine House for the Fire Department between 1884 and 1909, and also briefly as a hearse house (1888), a "ward room" or meeting place (1899), and a voting location (1917). Before being leased to the Mother of Grace organization in 1944, the building had been used as the city's "Continuation School," where those children interested in pursuing the trades or domestic arts were sent after grammar school to learn carpentry, electrical repairs, plumbing, or, in the case of girls, homemaking skills.

Chartered on 26 May 1953, the Mother of Grace Society was a group of mostly Sicilian women who first came together in the early 1940s with a desire to pray for an end to World War II and the safe return of their loved ones serving in the armed forces. During the war, 22% of Gloucester's total population – 5,675 men and women – and 40% of the male population served in the military; ultimately 114 were killed in action. Organized by Frances Aiello and Mary Frontiero, founding members included Rose Ciulla, Josephine Pallazola, Eleanor Gagliano, Rosalie Piscitello, Rose Lucido, Mrs. Pino, Sarina Barbara, Grace Barbagello, Sofie Brancalone, Jennie Giacalone, Maria Aiello, Lena Aiello, Domiana Cianciolo, Antoniette Militello, Maria Grillo, Natalina

*Continuation sheet 1*

**INVENTORY FORM B CONTINUATION SHEET**

GLOUCESTER

48 WASHINGTON STREET

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Mineo, Maria Fontana, and Frances Piscitello. The names and ethnic associations of the group's founding members merit further research. The club prayed the rosary in a private home, which soon proved inadequate to accommodate the large crowds in attendance. On 15 August 1944, the group secured a 100-year lease from the city for one dollar, to use this then-abandoned building as a clubhouse. Weston U. Friend was mayor of Gloucester at the time. Since the city did not provide money for building repairs, the women raised funds through bake sales, pizza sales, raffles, and the recruitment of more members, paying for renovations that ultimately included a new foundation, roof, bathroom, windows, siding, wiring, and plumbing. In 1951, the City of Gloucester sold the property to the "Mother Grace Club" for one dollar, with the provisions that the property would revert to the city if needed in the future for street widening or other public purpose, or if the club ceased to exist or carry on the religious work for which it was organized [Essex County (South) deeds 3866:125].

Mostly the wives of Gloucester fishermen, women in the Mother of Grace Club met regularly for informal family and community gatherings. With its emphasis on prayerful intercession; veneration of a statue of the Blessed Mother of Grace, which is maintained on a decorated altar in the clubhouse and carried in street processions; and fiestas offered in thanksgiving or annual celebration of the birthday of the Blessed Mother, the Mother of Grace Society shares many characteristics of saint societies and other religion-based social clubs present in other large Italian-American communities in eastern Massachusetts, especially in Boston's North End. Dominia Cianciola, a founding member of the Gloucester club, obtained the Blessed Mother statue from Italy and donated it to the organization in honor of her son, who was serving in the U. S. Navy in the Pacific Theater. Sewing committees decorated the altar in the clubhouse, provided curtains for the windows, and produced a banner to carry in processions.

The Mother of Grace club maintains the World War II Ward 2 Memorial on Middle Street, and the memorial is a stop during processions. Nine-day novenas precede the Mother of Grace fiestas each year, and are also celebrated in May. The rosary is prayed daily at the clubhouse in the afternoon and evening. While the St. Joseph novenas are prayed for the safety of Gloucester fishermen, the Mother of Grace Club prays for world peace.

**BIBLIOGRAPHY and/or REFERENCES**

Gloucester maps and atlases: 1872, 1873, 1884, 1899.

Sanborn maps: 1888, 1892, 1898, 1903, 1909, 1917, 1949, 1960.

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----- Email to Wendy Frontiero re: founding members. 22 April 2016.

Salvo, Dana. "The Mother of Grace Club." Via <http://168.144.121/83/culturereport/artists/salvo/index03>. Retrieved April 2016.

Essex County (South) deeds, 3866:125.

Ferraiuolo, Augusto. *Religious Festive Practices in Boston's North End. Ephemeral Identities in an Italian American Community*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2009.

*The Gloucester Fire Department. Its History and Work from 1793 to 1893*. Gloucester: Steam Fire Association, 1892.

SUPPLEMENTARY IMAGES



East (façade) and north elevations

	GLO.
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National Register of Historic Places Criteria Statement Form

Check all that apply:

- ☐ Individually eligible      ☐ Eligible **only** in a historic district
- ☐ Contributing to a potential historic district      ☐ Potential historic district

Criteria:    ☐ **A**    ☐ **B**    ☐ **C**    ☐ **D**

Criteria Considerations:    ☐ **A**    ☐ **B**    ☐ **C**    ☐ **D**    ☐ **E**    ☐ **F**    ☐ **G**

Statement of Significance by

*The criteria that are checked in the above sections must be justified here.*